

Benjamin H. Latrobe to Thomas Jefferson, July 24, 1817, with University of Virginia Plan, from Thomas Jefferson and the National Capital. Edited by Saul K. Padover.

Latrobe to Jefferson

Washington July 24th 1817

THOS JEFFERSON, ESQR

Monticello

Dear Sir,

Yesterday I had the pleasure to receive your letter d. July 16th (p. mark 19th). I had presumed that you were from home, and also that as your institution has been so lately organized, some time could be given to the preparation of a design for the buildings. — But by your letter I find not only that I have been designing under a great misconception of your *local* but also have presumed upon more time for deliberation than you can give me. — I supposed from your letter, & the sketch it contains, that your ground would be tolerably level along the *long & closed* side of your open quadrangle, which side, I suppose would be the North side, was to make the continued portico face to the South. But in your last letter occur these words: “The levelling the ground into Terraces will take time & labor.” *We propose a distinct terras for every 2 pavilions, & their dormitories, that is a pavilion at each end of each terrace.*

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Thus it appears to me, that instead of a continuous line of building, you want a series of detached masses, on different levels. I write

in great haste this morning, & surrounded by interruptions, or I would send you better sketches than are below. They will explain the ideas I had. — Not having a copy of my great Sheet I will retain it, till I have again the pleasure of hearing from you when I may perhaps add something useful. — A week will thus be lost, which I regret, but it may not be in vain.—

The locks of the Potowmac lower Canal having fallen in, beyond the power of Art to restore them, we suffer difficulty in getting down our *Columbian* Marble; but a great effort will be made to bring them thence by Land. Your opinion on the suggestions which I ventured to make as to the origin of this Marble, in my paper in the Nat. Intelligencer of the 18th of Jany., would be particularly acceptable to me. If they apply to the range with which you are acquainted, my opinion that these pebbles are the beach of the ancient Gulph stream, & are probably the ruins of Southern Marbles once occupying the excavation of the Gulphs of Darien & Mexico may receive more plausibility. The Abbe Roxas told me, & pointed out in the Block which I had polished, that many of the pieces were Mexican Marbles well known to him.

I am with the sincerest respect Yrs

B Henry Latrobe

[Ms., *Jefferson Papers*, Library of Congress.]